

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2006

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
624 Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
624 Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Gregg and Senator Conrad:

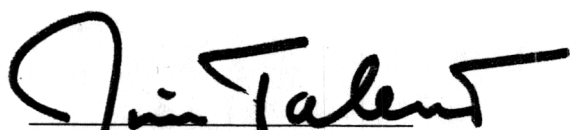
We write to underscore the importance of maintaining the commitments made to American farm families, rural communities, low income families and children, risk management, and conservation under U.S. farm policy. Therefore, we strongly urge you not to include any reconciliation instructions to the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee in the budget resolution.

We share your commitment to deficit reduction and look forward to working with you to achieve this goal. But, it is important to consider what U.S. farm policy has already contributed to deficit reduction. U.S. farm policy for commodities has already achieved \$12.9 billion in savings compared to the Congressional Budget Office's August 2002 projection. Meanwhile, mandatory funding for conservation, rural development, trade promotion, research, renewable energy, and forestry initiatives have all sustained cuts in the last two years totaling billions. These numbers do not include another \$38 million in annual cuts to Federal Crop Insurance resulting from the renegotiation of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement with crop insurance providers or the \$2.7 billion in savings to be achieved over the next 5 years as a consequence of last year's budget reconciliation.

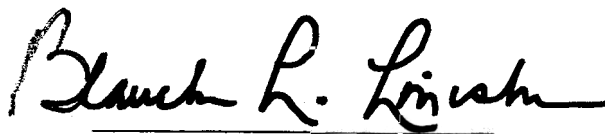
U.S. farm policy for commodities only amounts to 0.76 percent of total federal spending, while helping sustain an economic sector representing 17 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 25 million jobs, and \$3.5 trillion in economic activity. Yet while this area of farm policy has already achieved billions in savings, the most recent budget proposal contemplates yet another \$9 billion in cuts over the next 10 years from both commodities and crop insurance. Additionally, these proposals actually increase the odds of Congress being forced to enact additional emergency assistance in the future. These reductions are in addition to a proposed 6.5 percent cut to discretionary agriculture funding. This level of reduced funding is not acceptable.

Thank you for your consideration as you undertake the difficult task of working to craft a budget resolution.

Sincerely,



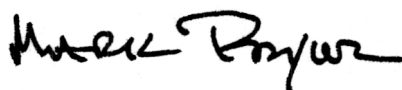
James M. Talent
United States Senate



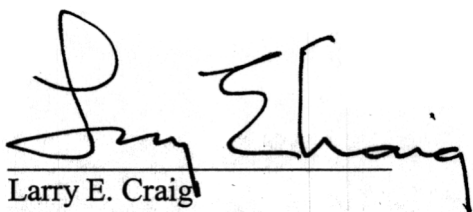
Blanche L. Lincoln
United States Senate



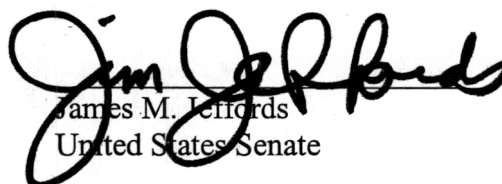
Norm Coleman
United States Senate




Mark L. Pryor
United States Senate



Larry E. Craig
United States Senate



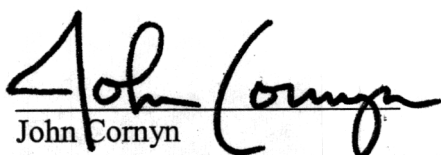
James M. Jeffords
United States Senate



Mike Dewine
United States Senate




Mary E. Landrieu
United States Senate



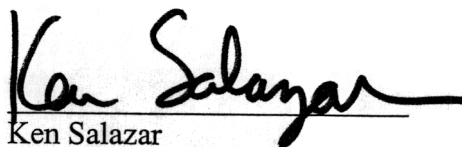
John Cornyn
United States Senate



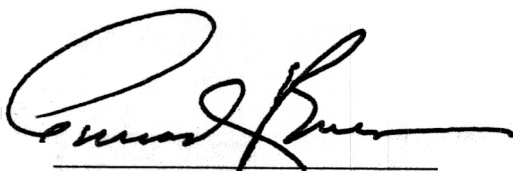
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate



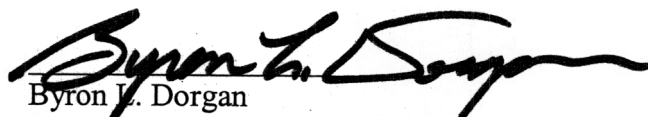
Christopher S. Bond
United States Senate



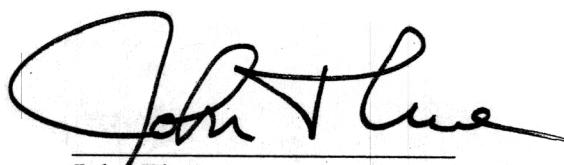
Ken Salazar
United States Senate



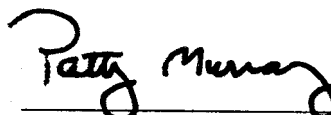
Conrad Burns
United States Senate



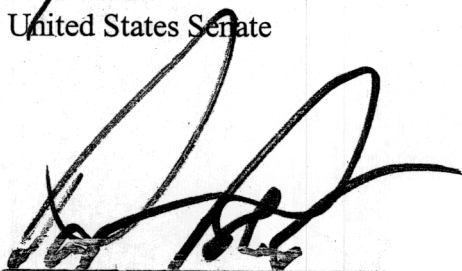
Byron D. Dorgan
United States Senate



John Thune
United States Senate



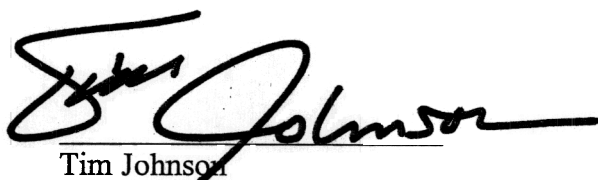
Patty Murray
United States Senate



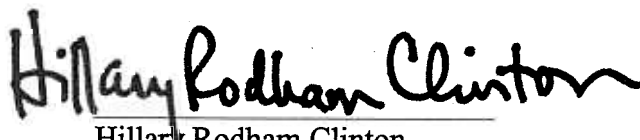
Pat Roberts
United States Senate



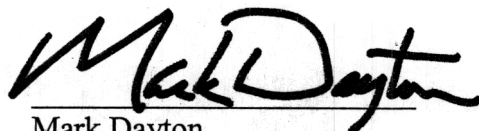
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate



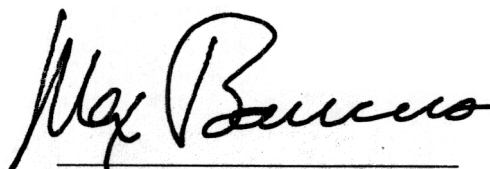
Tim Johnson
United States Senate



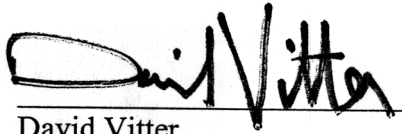
Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate



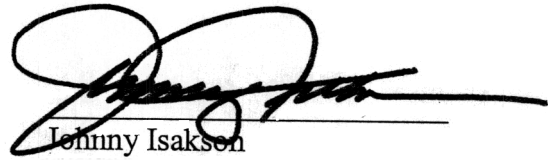
Mark Dayton
United States Senate



Max Baucus
United States Senate



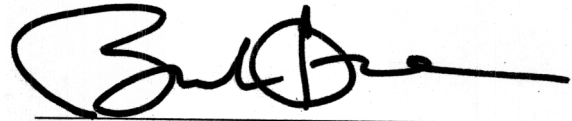
David Vitter
United States Senate



Johnny Isakson
United States Senate



George Allen
United States Senate



Barack Obama
United States Senate